



July 13, 2007

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman, U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The Organic Trade Association is most appreciative of the strong effort you and the Committee have made to create a Farm Bill focused on creating value added opportunities while enhancing the rural environment. We commend you and the House Agriculture Committee for formulating the 2007 Farm Bill with an approach that is sensitive to the needs of both agriculture and consumers.

As you know the Organic Trade Association set out an ambitious agenda for the 2007 Farm Bill debate. Consumer demand for organic products has grown significantly since the last farm bill. Your help is critical to build infrastructure for organic agriculture and processing in the United States so that more of the ever-growing demand for organic food, fiber and personal care products – all created from agricultural products – can be met by U.S. organic certified farmers, and be processed in the U.S. as well.

OTA's members have been pleased by the response we have received from you and the House Agriculture Committee members. Thank you for acknowledging the role organic agriculture can play in increasing profitability of small and medium size farmers in America, while fulfilling a strong consumer demand. Your strong desire to have increasing resources for organic agriculture and processing in the bill is greatly appreciated. Organic production and processing are strong value added components for agriculture, while at the same time contributing to enhanced soil, air and water quality.

A great deal has already been accomplished to advance organic agriculture in this bill. So far the Committee has worked on the special problems of crop insurance for organic farmers, and taken steps to expand USDA's collection of data that will lead to an experience based insurance program, and deeper understanding the organic market better. OTA appreciates the creation of access to more EQIP opportunities, and other small but important innovative programs to benefit organic. One of the few current aids to organic farmers is the cost share for certification and you have expanded this program to more nearly meet current needs of organic farmers, and designated it for all organic farmers across the country. We appreciate your support for farmers' markets, a strong first site where organic farmers can meet consumers.

OTA continues to work with the Committee to advance efforts to offer technical assistance and provide assistance for the organic conversion of U.S. crops and livestock, to strengthen USDA's organic efforts, and to strengthen the Committee's work on organic research issues.

Mr. Chairman, we realize that you and the Committee are working under very difficult budgetary constraints. We do appreciate the effort you and the Committee are making to increase resources for organic agriculture in this Farm Bill.

Sincerely yours,

Caren Wilcox
Executive Director & CEO
Organic Trade Association